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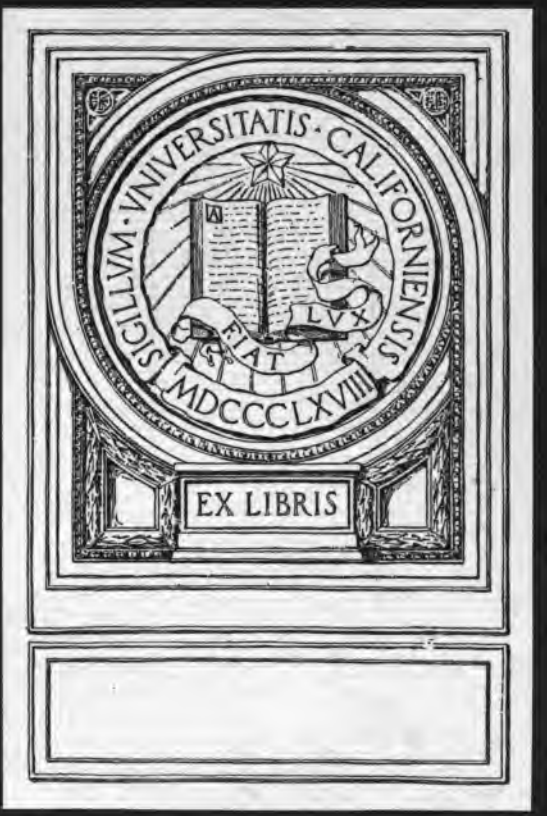
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HE WAR AND THE WOMEN

BY

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

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THE WAR AND THE WOMEN

By ISRAEL ZANGWILL

GERMAN HUMOR AND THE GERMAN FRAU

IT cannot be a mere coincidence that the war was made in Germany, the Male State *in excelsis*, where women, in the Kaiser's favorite saying, must stick to her three K's—Kitchen, Kids and Kirk, we may perhaps render it. Not for her the glories of the *Turnverein*, the beatitude of the beer-hall, or the gospel of slashing the other cheek: not even a legal status separate from her lord, whose professorial or medical title she shares.

That to this status of the German woman Armageddon may be due is no fantastic speculation. For it is only by sheer absence of humor that Germany's brain could have tumefied with the notion of a Teutonic mission to mankind—by submarine and poison-gas—and absence of humor is directly traced by Meredith to contempt for the woman. "If the German men," he observed in his "Essay on Comedy," "would consent to talk on equal terms with their women, and to listen to them, Comedy, or in any form, the Comic spirit will come to them." That is to say, women's corrective criticism would have brought proportion, and proportion is the mother of humor. But they have not listened to their women, and so (as by the bad fairy's gift at a christening) all the other delightful gifts of the race, all the music, science and philosophy, are spoiled. For the dancing smile in the eyes of wisdom, the Teuton has only the grin of the gargoyle. "His irony," says Meredith, "is a missile of terrific tonnage: sarcasm he emits like a blast from the dragon's mouth. He must and will be Titan."

If, then, his insolent isolation from feminine influence is the deepest cause of his swashbuckling temper, it follows that the position of women is not a factor of history to be lightly disregarded, nor

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one that fails to wreak its effects because historians and politicians neglect to take it into account.

WOMEN AND THE OHM

Electricians divide bodies by the resistance they offer to the passage of electric force as calculated in "ohms." Humanity may be divided into classes by the resistance they offer to new ideas. The Americans, for example, have a small ohmage, the English a high. Judged by the evolution of their women, old countries like Sweden and Finland are less resistant than even the New World. In England woman has not moved a step in any direction without a hue and cry. Tragical is the story of the first medical pioneers, and equality with the man physician is even yet not won, though every new female doctor is now hailed as a godsend by the male millions engaged night and day in making work for her. The "lost volts" is the pathetic name for the units of electricity wasted through resistance. What a ghastly waste of human force this British bulldoggedness is answerable for!

But sometimes in every country this ohmage of obstinacy is overwhelmed by sudden forces. Social evolution, which proceeds usually like the snail, proceeds at these moments like the kangaroo—"by leaps and bounds"—just as geological changes which in normal times are imperceptibly slow are sometimes cataclysmic. Such a volcanic upheaval has the war brought to women. In this transformation of the social landscape the suffrage question has become a relatively insignificant landmark.

VENUS AND HER SHELL

The cause of woman's sudden rise in status is the discovery that, like the horse, she is not merely a domestic beast of burden, but may also be useful for war. In a passive sense the discovery was not new. Did not Sir Walter Scott announce it in his famous apostrophe to "Woman in our hours of ease?" Did not Victor Hugo glorify the French-

women in the siege of Paris, who " gave to despairing combatants the encouragement of their smile, who refused even before hunger, even before death, the surrender of their city "? But Patience smiling at grief, though it may be set on a monument, wins little real regard in the " man-made " world. Not even the active business services universally rendered in France by Frenchwomen could rescue them from the insignificance attaching to a sex that merely creates and does not destroy. And in England, though Florence Nightingale practically saved our Crimean Army, she was impotent to help the army of women pushing into the arena at home. Besides, war had not for centuries really come home to the British breast. In the great Napoleonic days when Jane Austen was writing her quiet country-house comedies, with never a word of the events that were shaking mankind, war was for England a foreign adventure, restricted mainly to two social classes, the cream of the cream, and the dregs of the gutter. Your military acquaintance—your gay ensigns and crusty colonels—went off to the wars much as an expedition now goes off to the Antarctic. It was all very brave and interesting, but except on the black days described in " Vanity Fair," when casualty lists were coming in, it did not particularly touch the rooted population. If this was so with the male civilian, how much more with the female. But now it appears that the civilian cannot be left out of the business and that the female may be as destructive as the male. Women — even ladies of quality — can actually make shells, nay, accoring to Mr. Asquith, who saw thousands of whilom dressmakers, milliners and parlor-maids at their fell work, they can make them " perhaps a little better " than men. And this revelation led our Arch Anti-Suffragist to the surmise that possibly they could do many other unexpected things. A Daniel come to judgment, indeed! It is true there were—long before the

war—seven million women, "gainfully occupied," but the State had never yet observed them, nor ever considered their employment or unemployment a factor in social phenomena. To-day every eye is upon Venus rising—as in Botticelli's picture—on her shell. The State includes women in the National Register. The *Times* devotes to their services a chapter of its "History of the War."

SEE THE CONQUERING HEROINE COMES!

And not only does woman feed the fighting line directly as munition-maker and general provider, and tend it as nurse, doctor and ambulance bearer, it has been discovered that in every direction she can relieve man and release him for the front. In the antediluvian age before the war, any feminine encroachment upon the male preserve would have been met as the workmen in the Brieux play, *La Femme Seule*, met their women competitors—with the male fist. And if the new function involved changes of vesture or appearance, then the small boy, whom I have elsewhere saluted as "the scavenger of manners," would have made life unbearable for the innovatress until she had worn him out by multiplication. But to-day? Why, the mere pictures in "The *Times*' History of the War" reveal women (in appropriate costumes) as police-women, telegraph-messengers, postwomen, plow-women, sheep-shearers, page-girls, motorists, van-drivers, commissionaires, railway booking-clerks, ticket and luggage porters, omnibus and tram conductresses, bill-posters, butchers and bargees! There is even—*O tempora, O mores*—a games-mistress in a boys' school! The very Government Offices—immemorial abodes of the Barnacle—have women attendants, and I have myself gone up to a Minister in a woman-escorted lift. What wonder if there move through our streets without ragamuffin rebuke the khaki-clad warriors of the Women's Volunteer Reserve! Thus ends the long divorce

between arms and the woman, thus revives the Shakespearean picture of the days of " King John."

> For your own ladies and pale-visag'd maids,
> Like Amazons, come tripping after drums,
> Their thimbles into armed gauntlets change.
> Their needles to lances, and their gentle hearts
> To fierce and bloody inclination!

THE SEXLESS SINEWS OF WAR

But in addition to the many ways in which woman is actually seen stoking the furnaces of war, there is a growing recognition that even the woman at home is playing her part in the war. That men must fight and women must weep was long the stock argument of the Anti-Suffragists—for who would give a vote to tears? In vain we Suffragists tried to make them understand that the fighting part of a nation was only the white-crested wave that throws itself furiously on the shore—behind it was the whole ocean of national energy. In vain we pointed out that a nation was after all only a collection of homes and that it was from these homes that all the national strength issued, were it but in the shape of " man that is born of woman " or resources born of both. To-day press megaphones and flamboyant posters have proclaimed this truth to the dullest. Every hoarding has shown us the munition-maker hand in hand with the soldier, warriors both. The War Loan carried on the tale. " Do you want to save our Sailors' and Soldiers' lives? " women, no less than men, were asked in great Governmental advertisements. " Do you want to bring the War to an end? " " You can make your money fight for you." " If you cannot use the sword for your Country, you can use your pen by filling up this form." The silver bullet, in short, can be sped by a woman's hand, and the sinews of war are sexless.

With half a million German women making war material, from the very outbreak of war, with the domesticated *Frau* producing forty per cent of the explosives and fifty per cent of the equipment, not to mention her replacing railway, tram-way and motor-men, it could hardly escape attention even in Germany that the three K's had been transcended and that the great male K (Krieg or Khaki) was not so outside the female province as that arrant K, the Kaiser, had imagined. As the *Frankfurter Zeitung* confessed with characteristic German thoroughness, "Many of us have in these months felt it to be a defect that in Germany the State, with its system of universal service, embraces only the men, and them only in so far as they are capable of bearing arms. This system was decided upon at a time when wars were conducted with weapons only, and it no longer fits the present state of things, in which everything, gold and food, industrial products and science, is a means of carrying on war and in which the war itself consists to a great extent of scientific and economic labor."

War consists to a great extent of scientific and economic labor. So at last man has discovered midday at twelve o'clock! "Every pit is a trench, every workshop a rampart," cries Lloyd-George, vividly lamenting the legions of miners and munition-makers a short-sighted policy had lured to Flanders. Armageddon may, it appears, finally hinge on the manufacture of machine-tools. With war thus got beyond the tomahawk stage, the poor squaw can now as little be excluded from the tug of it as she ever was from the misery and murderousness of it. Battles are won in the factory as well as the field, and in the cornfield no less than the field of war. They were always won in the kitchen and the nursery.

FRANCE STILL SEEKING THE WOMAN

The game of " Cherchez la Femme " has so long distorted the French vision that France cannot even now find her as quickly as Germany has done. For Germany had only to open its eyes to see: whereas the long practise of the leer had given France a permanent squint. Hence while in the German railways, tramways and shops a systematic substitution of women for men began simultaneously with the mobilization of the army, in France the substituted reserve was as far as possible drawn from males too old or too young for war, and although women did largely replace men, it was mainly as a family affair. Mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, stepped into the breach less as women than as relatives. The Paris " underground " set the example—which was largely followed—of inviting the women of the family to occupy the places of their menkind and keep them warm till their return, and in philanthropy no less than in industry woman has not asserted herself as an independent sex, with separate organizations. Thus in France woman is still not " on her own." Nevertheless, since many of the males, alas! will never come back to their posts, some of this new labor must inevitably escape dislodgement at the end of the war. Not by thus evading the labor problem of women can France circumvent it. At the worst their temporary employment will have thrown considerable new illumination upon their capacities and military value. Italy, which is below even France in its handling of the woman question, and which at the outset of the war saw woman conductors hooted off the cars, is little likely to end the war in the same mood.

THE PUGNACIOUS PANKHURSTS

And all this new activity and all this reinterpretation and recognition of old activity takes place in the fierce light that beats upon a boom. Had

not the Female Suffrage question been set in violent motion by the Pankhursts, it is possible that the object lessons of the war would not have been reaped for the benefit of the cause. And nothing has more contributed to the sinking in of these morals than the wise and patriotic action of the Pankhursts in suspending their militancy, whose relative innocuousness was, moreover, suddenly revealed by the bonfires of the man-made hell. "The Suffragette," still doggedly declaring that there was no way of winning the vote save by fighting, and that in the impossibility of fighting it was useless going on, suspended publication. The other Suffrage parties, which had not placed their trust in their fighting power, found no such difficulty in continuing their organs, even though their activities were mainly transferred to relief work and military service of every kind, for which their existing organization of women provided a ready-made machine. The National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage pursued similarly the path of beneficence, so that the Suffrage movement may be congratulated on having called into existence this valuable federation of female activities. The Anti-Suffragist women had always occupied a Gilbertian platform in emphasizing from it that woman's place was the home, and the paradox was not diminished by the attempt to eke out its negations by a demand for the municipal franchise. For it is obvious that the female Anti-Suffragist, like Aristotle's skeptic, cannot stir a finger without self-contradiction. The crowning irony was her enlistment in the khaki clad ranks of the Volunteer Training Corps and the National Reserve. No wonder she made a point of "eschewing advertisement" and with "patriotic abnegation" silently absorbing herself in other female bodies. A militant Anti-Suffragist might have touched even Mrs. Humphry Ward's sense of humor.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANTI-SUFFRAGE

There was once a social state composed of families, each unit circling round and represented by the male bread-winner. He went out into the hurly-burly: the woman remained the delicate flower of the home. It was a conception not without its beauty. For this it is now sought to substitute families with a dual center, and equal rights in the hurly-burly for both sexes. It is a conception not without its ugliness. But the striving for it is not a mere play of the brain. The female flowers have been already flung out of the home: millions of Englishwomen have been driven into factories, shops and offices. The Anti-Suffragists did not attempt to drive back this labor into the security and sanctity of the home, and the attempt to secure for it the same political status as male labor they combated. Placed between two worlds, they made the worst of both.

THE CRUSADE OF CHRISTABEL

Their arch-antagonist, Miss Christabel Pankhurst, abandoned her place of exile in France to tour in the States as a champion of England and rendered valuable service in that hotbed of pro-Germanism by her oratorical and dialectical powers; her repartee, sharpened by years of practise against the Briton, galling now the German-American. Possibly there was in this campaign of hers some of the remorse and zeal of the convert. Possibly she felt she owed reparation to England for being one of the factors that inclined the Kaiser to war. At any rate the tyranny and truculence of which she had for years accused the British Government became now the peculiar property of Prussia, while England loomed as Liberty's one homestead and safeguard. On her return from this penitential pilgrimage she abounded even more in this sense. "The Suffragette" was revived. But the reborn offspring was no longer the legiti-

mate organ of the movement. It should rather have been called "The War Baby," so unmistakably was it a child of military passion. (It is significant that the care of the War Babies is precisely the task selected by the Pankhursts from all the philanthropic possibilities.) Not one of the press demagogues who daily or weekly whip up the beast in man, not one of the militarists who are out to crush militarism could vie with Christabel Pankhurst in her impassioned torrent of Jingoese. The worst extravagances of our Junker journalists were outdone. I know no male fire-eater who has set forth so drastic a program as this "female of the species."

"Institute compulsory national service, military and industrial. Tighten the Blockade so that Germany shall not receive a single thing helpful to them in the prosecution of the war. Purify the official organization of the country of naturalized Germans and of Germans born in England but of German blood. Purify it, too, of any British blood who may be pro-German or half-hearted in the prosecution of the war." Even "true-born Englishmen," you see, less bellicose than the majority, are to be kicked out of England! And it is only the other day that the papers were discsusing what island could serve as the St. Helena of the Suffragettes.

CHRISTABEL, ANTI-SUFFRAGIST

Of course this root-and-branch rhodomontade is only another illustration of her headlong extremism, of her crude conception of statesmanship as militancy, and of tactics as invariably frontal and furious. And her most furious rushes have been directed, oddly enough, against the Union of Democratic Control, constituted of the very men who first risked their reputation on behalf of her derided movement. Not that they had not already been castigated the moment they had disagreed

with her tactics. But she might have remembered that the Union was the first political body to announce that by "Democratic Control" is meant a joint government of men and women, and that its object was to sweep away the secret diplomacy and veiled autocracy that nullify the male vote, and will make the female vote, when it is obtained, equally ineffective in the vast issues of peace and war. These issues mould our lives far more than the questions we are permitted to vote upon, and to bring them equally under the sphere of the vote must be the desire of every suffragist. But then there never was a person more essentially Anti-Suffragist than Christabel Pankhurst. Nobody has ever been allowed a vote in the affairs of her Union. She is simply a dictator born out of her due sex and time. It happened that the state of society afforded no scope for her natural driving-power, and so she was reduced to the leadership of women. But her constant obsession with the image of Joan of Arc shows—as the psycho-analyst would say—that all along she has subconsciously hankered to lead men. For Joan of Arc did not win the battles of France with an army of Amazons. Now, spurring and cheering on the army of men, bidding them roll their enemies in the dust, Miss Pankhurst is at last in her true element. And the word "purge," which she ingeminates, recalls her other ambition to be Cromwell—the Cromwell of "Pride's Purge" and "Take away that bauble." She actually calls for a Cromwell to purge a certain London Club of its "pro-Germans." And her following has changed with her program. Of the "Women's Social and Political Union" and "The Suffragette" practically only the names remain. The Pankhursts are now the idols of the mob. Philistine M.P.'s have supported their meetings, Bishops blessed their propaganda, noble lords prosed on their platform, genteel ladies walked in their processions to demand the free and equal

right to make explosives, and the papers have photographed and puffed them. Reported at last and at length by the great organs that had boycotted her, acclaimed by the great mobs that had clamored to duck her, Christabel Pankhurst in the new-born "Suffragette" cried in capital letters, with a lack of humor that touched the sublime,

"TRUST THE PEOPLE AND DEFY THE CRANKS."

It is a tragic circle in human affairs that the ex-martyr becomes the parvenu persecutor. But this assimilation of the Pankhursts to the mob is an asset to their cause proper. The masses, taught thus to find in woman so potent a reinforcement of their prejudices, will come to recognize how stupid was the Anti-Suffrage policy which deprived them of so valuable an ally. It was always the fatal mistake of Miss Pankhurst to overlook that Woman Suffrage was essentially a man's question, that in man's hands lay the ultimate power of granting or withholding it, and that only by pleasing men could women—in the last analysis—achieve their emancipation. Now that by a happy accident the Pankhurst's platform coincides with that of the man in the street, now that the Pankhursts are able to "feed the brute" with his own gross diet, they stand far nearer his heart and their goal. Not to fight man, but to second and sponge him in his own fight, is the road to female suffrage. The palm denied to the Christian martyr will be won by the recruiting sergeant.

The tragedy of this degeneration lies not in the character of Christabel Pankhurst—which is unchanged and unchangeable—but in the character of Mrs. Pankhurst, possessed by the daimon of her daughter. It is impossible to read the earlier speeches of Mrs. Pankhurst without seeing that in her the age had produced one of those rare spirits who come to interpret and incarnate the great saying of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Hopeth all

things, suffereth all things, believeth all things." The first Mrs. Pankhurst knew that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth no violence and is not taken by assault, and her victory, had it come then, would have been a victory for *female* suffrage, for the contribution of gentleness and social reform, which *woman* has to bring to politics. The victory, when it comes now, will be only a victory for a swash-buckling suffrage, apparelled at all points like a man.

THE WOMEN'S PEACE CONGRESS

Happily other women have appeared, not so content as the Pankhursts " to play the sedulous ape " to man, or to be dominated by his outlook. The women who met at The Hague in an International Congress that embraced both Englishwomen and Germanwomen had anticipated Romain Rolland's appeal to women to cease to be " men's shadows." " The women who do not fight have no right to goad on the fight," said the distinguished French-women who addressed a greeting to the Congress. And they laid down " the fundamental principle of feminism " as " the wish to create, while destroying war, a better and juster humanity." Just because they had no political voice in any of the belligerent countries, it was for them now to say what the men who were fighting could not say, and to preserve the spirit of international fraternity. And so this Congress of Women from a dozen nations, under the presidency of Jane Addams, protested unanimously against " the madness and horror of war," believing with Queen Elinor in " King John ":

> This might have been prevented and made whole
> With very easy arguments of love
> Which now the manage of two kingdoms must
> With fearful bloody issue arbitrate.

The Congress protested, too, against the assumption that women were protected in the war, and adjured " the Governments of the world " to put an

end to it. Nor was their protest to be Platonic. Under the inspiration of the practical and elaborately worked out project by Miss Julia Wales, of Wisconsin University, entitled " Continuous Mediation Without Armistice," it was resolved to try to create a Conference of Neutral Nations for this purpose, also " to invite suggestions for settlement from each of the belligerent nations," and in any case to submit simultaneously to all of them " reasonable proposals as a basis of peace." Women would, in fact, try to mediate between their males, as one tries to disentangle dogs. Nay, more, the women have actually gone out from this Congress —like Queen's Messengers—and have been received by Kings, Premiers and Presidents. The scheme of " Continuous Mediation " has been adopted likewise by the Quakers and is said to be regarded by some Governments as " the sanest plan yet suggested." For climax, the Congress resolved that an international meeting of women shall be held in the same town and at the same time as the Congress of Powers, which shall frame the terms of the Peace Settlement after the war, for the purpose of presenting practical proposals to the Conference. Women *will* be " men's shadows," but in what a novel sense! Side by side with the portentous and pontificial Male Congress which has always hitherto done the carving of the nations and never failed to make a hash of it, will sit—like sober peahens beside their peacocks—a body of women interpreting national dignity and sovereignty and all the grandiose vocabulary of the male in terms of human life.

THE PEAHEN'S POINT OF VIEW

" We women judge war differently from men," said Dr. Aletta Jacobs, the Dutch initiatress of the Peace Congress. " Men consider in the first place the economic results, the extension of power and so forth. But what is material loss to us women in comparison to the number of fathers, husbands,

brothers and sons who march out to war, never to return? We women consider above all the damage to the race resulting from war and the grief and the pain and the misery it entails." That woman should thus revise what Thackeray called "The Devil's code of honor" is not surprising, for she has actually borne in pain and reared in sick anxiety the body it is proposed to mutilate. "Unruly" as Shakespeare's Duchess of York, she cries to her lord:

Hadst thou groaned for him
As I have done, thoud'st be more pitiful.

I do not forget the Spartan mother who bade her son return with his shield or on it. But that mother had had no chance of developing an outlook of her own. Sparta was not so much a state as a barrack: every mother's son, unless he had been killed off as too sickly for a soldier, was taken from her at the age of seven to be stupefied by drill. She could only please her master by exaggerated echoes of his "Laconic" wisdom. To-day even in the Sparta of Prussia women have courted martyrdom by their protests against the war. And the wisdom of even the male Peace-maker is no longer to go unquestioned, for as we have seen woman has resolved to shadow the Peace Congress and send it suggestions. There is a certain high comedy in the situation, because everything will probably have been cut-and-dried beforehand by secret treaty, as it was at the Congress of Berlin. But what a stride forward in the position of woman since 1878, when Beaconsfield and Bismarck remodeled Europe with results that are before us! It is she who aspires to save civilization in the collapse of the politicians, and religion in the breakdown of the bishops. Not every pious lady has been making shells on Sunday, and Christianity never had a nobler and more eloquent apostle than Miss Maude Royden, touring heathen Britain in a van. The seventh centenary of Magna Charta—not astonishingly ignored by

Englishmen—was celebrated this year by the Women's Freedom League.

WOMAN AS SANCHO PANZA

Thus there is solid ground for confidence that the enfranchisement of women will not end in the addition of ten million pseudo-males to the electorate. What Mr. Roosevelt—in his gentle voice—calls the "shrieking sisterhood" will not merely echo the bawling brotherhood. Much more likely is it that the pseudo-chivalry of the male, with all its glittering medieval lumber, will be swept away by female common sense as remorselessly as his military plumes and laces have been shorn away by the shears of necessity. Woman will play the Sancho Panza to the demented Don Quixote, with his babble of "battles, enchantments, adventures, extravagances, combats and challenges," and where he saw two mighty armies with pomp and pageantry of "arms, colors, devices and mottoes," she will see only the two flocks of sheep that were really there, obscured by the cloud of dust: the dumb herds driven to slaughter and lost in the dust thrown into the world's eyes by politicians and poets. She will see Rozinante, not as the war-horse clothed in thunder, but as the lean starveling hack of reality, and Dulcinea, in whose honor the battle is joined, as the frowsy hoyden she is. There are, indeed, a few men who can see through the dust almost as clearly as women. "Only the other day," complains the *Times* of July 17, "a member of Parliament was talking about the money that would be wanted for housing after the war, and evidence is always cropping up to show that social reform still fills the mind of politicians and officials as the real business before them. The war is only an episode in their eyes!" Degenerate Britons! How—as Roosevelt witheringly puts it—shall milk-and-water match blood-and-iron? Unfortunately Miss Margaret Scott tells us that without a quart

of milk a day a sturdy soldier cannot be reared, and it would even seem as if "social reform" is as necessary to safeguard the population as trenches and field-guns.

AFTER THE WAR

Historians tell us that the Crusades, designed to win the tomb of Christ, promoted commercial intercourse between East and West. Germany, setting out to assert the male ideal, has given an immense jog to the feminine. But the price would have staggered the optimism of a Pangloss. Ho-ti, whose house must be burned down before he could taste crackling, roasted his pig infinitely cheaper. The loss of legions of young men will increase the number of spinsters, who will clamor with increasing outspokenness for a revised sex ethic. The entry of women into so many occupations will produce female blacklegs and gravely agitate the Trade Unions. There will be friction all along the line at those points which women have not yet stormed—and these embrace in England the whole of the legal profession, the higher walks of the civil service and even of medicine, not to mention Parliament and Government. The end of the war will bring not Peace, but sex strife, added to the inevitable economic discontents. For the social landscape cannot be transformed for woman without changing man's situation, too. When the valleys are exalted the hills are apt to subside. By an odd coincidence the female chapter of the *Times'* "History of the War" winds up with a picture of a woman "Making a Doll's House." That was, it appears, and not only from Ibsen, an exclusively male occupation. What sinister symbolism lurks in this climax? Is the man to be henceforward the pampered puppet?

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